



Eureka Fire Department 2010 1st Quarter Report

Chief's Report

Chief Eric M. Smith



YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT THE NEW YEAR WILL BRING

With the coming of the New Year, the Eureka Fire Department saw a flurry of activity including the January 9th, 6.5 magnitude earthquake which caused a surprising amount of damage throughout our community. Preliminary damage estimates as of April 29th total close to \$23,600,000. This event was a critical reminder of the geology and seismic activity of our region and the need to be prepared personally and professionally.

To some, earthquakes are considered a common occurrence. This lack of frequency has allowed our community's collective preparedness and mitigation efforts to erode. Shortly after the event, our public safety dispatch center was quickly overloaded with calls for service and information, processing over 700 calls in the period after the earthquake. Fire, Police, and Public Works crews were called into service utilizing both on and off duty personnel to handle the deluge of requests for service. Many of these situations were non-emergent and could have been reduced had our citizens been better prepared.

A recent FEMA Preparedness Study identified that many Americans are less prepared than they think. This study determined that only 57% of Americans felt that they were adequately prepared for a pending disaster. To be adequately prepared, everyone should have at least three days of dedicated emergency supplies including food, water, and medicine stored at home. Additional items would include a Family Safety Plan and an individual "Go-Kit", which would be located in our cars and at work should we be away from home when the disaster strikes. Last but not least, we shouldn't forget our animals, as they are just as likely to become victims of the emergency as we are.

As in most situations, preparation also includes the mitigation of items that are known or prone to cause injury or damage. How many of you have taken the time to earthquake strap your large furniture items to the wall or have installed an earthquake valve on your natural gas line? Both of these are prime examples of simple mitigation efforts that are known to reduce the chance of injury and fire after a seismic event.

Preparedness and mitigation efforts are just as applicable in government. In large natural events, such as the recent earthquake, the tendency is to avoid

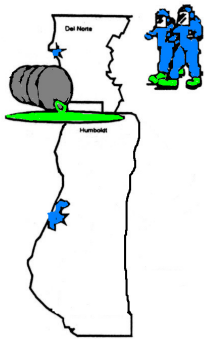
going into disaster management mode and to utilize our normal mode of operations. This response mentality is seriously flawed however, as it leads to under-delivering critical services, underestimating damage initially, and slowing the response of Regional, State, and Federal Assistance. I was extremely proud of my organization and its men and women on the evening of the event and the days following. We decided to initiate disaster management operations and immediately began non-typical fire service actions including the staffing of damage assessment teams. Through this one action alone, the City of Eureka received credit and accolades from both County OES and State Disaster officials as "having our act together."

While such comments are initially rewarding, in my mind, we have a long way to go to re-establish our community and city as regional leaders in disaster preparedness. I would like to challenge all of our citizens to be better prepared. Such an effort is not only simple, information is available through a number of great sources including FEMA and the American Red Cross, it can be a great family activity. Think of it as a scavenger hunt, delegating items to your various family members to develop as part of your "preparedness team". I would be negligent in my duties if I didn't also challenge our city into re-initiating its emergency preparedness efforts as we never know when the next event will strike our community. Remember, we never know what the New Year, (winter storm, truck crash, system failure...) will bring.

Sincerely, Chief Smith



The first quarter of 2010 was filled with budget-related issues and exploration of alternative funding structures by your Administrative Program. During the course of the quarter, much of our time was spent in meetings related to the mid-year budget review and the associated shortfall. Through this process, our staff worked closely with the Finance Department in identifying solutions to the challenges at hand. The most significant development was Council's decision not to implement Fire Response Fees. The council chose instead to investigate the concept of a Fire Benefit Assessment. Such benefit assessments are utilized by most of the other fire departments within our county and are required to go to a vote of the property owners affected. After much discussion and research, the Council elected not to pursue this alternative due to the estimated initial cost of preparation, including the Engineering assessment and public relations efforts.



While the budget dominated much of the first quarter, progress was made in a number of areas including Hazardous Material Response Team reconfiguration and Technical Rescue/Urban Search and Rescue Team development. Captain II Laidlaw and I worked extensively with the Hazardous Materials JPA in an effort to reduce its dependence upon Eureka Fire and its staff, specifically in a responder mode and the overall cost of the city's participation in this endeavor. Historically, the cost to the city of Eureka was close to \$40,000 dollars annually. Through our efforts, we will be able to reduce our participation from 12 members down to 8 members, thus reducing our personnel-related costs by up to one-third from previous years. I would also like to acknowledge the recent accomplishment of Captain II Ed Laidlaw. Captain Laidlaw recently led the Haz-Mat JPA through the Cal-EMA certification process associated with state certification as a "Type II" Hazardous Materials Response Team. Just prior to the development of this report, we received notification from Cal-EMA that the team had obtained this prestigious certification. As such, it not only validates our capabilities of response, it should open the door for additional grant, training, and funding opportunities.



As we move into the next quarter, we will continue to focus on protecting our most valued resources, our personnel and the citizens they protect, from the ravages or potential consequences of the current fiscal climate.



The First Quarter of 2010 was a busy time for the Suppression Division. One of the busiest events of the quarter was the January 9th earthquake. This event was the focus of not only the fire department, but the city and community as a whole. Fire department personnel responded very quickly to the event by moving all apparatus from their respective stations, both to insure that the doors would open, and to have the emergency vehicles outside in the event of an aftershock. Emergency response to incidents began almost immediately following the event, with engines responding to gas leaks, houses that had collapsed, a report of a structure fire, and PFAS alarms. Emergency crews responded to the Bayshore Mall for extensive ceiling collapse and minor injuries of occupants. Eureka Fire Department was assisted by our auto-aid partner, Humboldt Fire District #1 as we handled more than 75 reported incidents in the 24 hours following the event. The City had activated the Emergency Operations Center at Fire Department HQ in response to the earthquake, but due to damage to the building, the EOC was moved later that night, with the EOC being

operated from City Hall for the remainder of the event. No fire department personnel were housed at the fire station that night due to a "yellow tag" declaration of building damage from the Building Department. It was eerie to be in the building with no fire engines or personnel there. Crews stayed at the Wharfinger Building until Fire Department HQ was declared structurally safe the morning of January 10th. Crews remained involved over the next day obtaining damage survey information, and fire department personnel worked in the documentation portion of the EOC to help catalog damage and organize inspection teams. These personnel, in conjunction with staff from redevelopment, were key in development of informational packets for a visit by the Governor on Thursday January 14, 2010.

I would like to commend not only those from the fire department, but from the City and community as a whole as we all worked through the aftermath of this disruptive event. It shows a community spirit and pride that I feel lucky to be a part of.

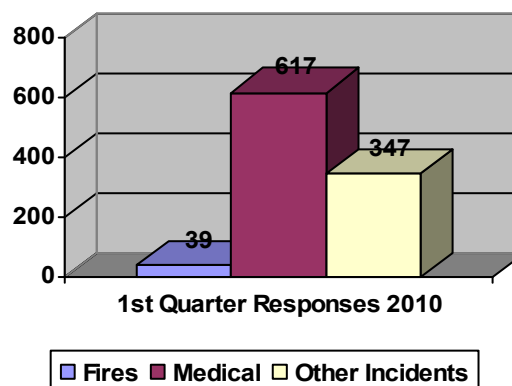
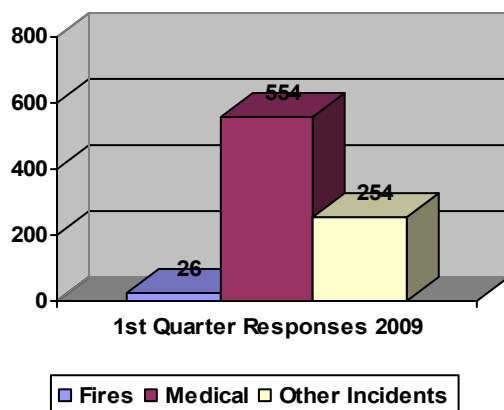
Bill Gillespie

Incident Activity

During the quarter, EFD responded to 39 fires, 15 of which were listed as structures. Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Incidents, including minor and major medical aids, traffic collisions, extrications and rescues, and lift assist calls accounted for 617 incidents. All other calls for service accounted for 347 responses. These figures come from Firehouse data provided for the quarter.

1st Quarter Response Statistics

FY 2009-2010 Comparison



Collateral Duties

Apparatus

Emergency Medical
Services (EMS)Equipment
-Hand ToolsFacilities
-Buildings & Grounds

Hose/Nozzles

Hydrants
-Testing & DataInfectious Disease
Control

Maps/GIS

Monitoring Equipment

Personal Protective
Equipment

Power Equipment

Radios/Pagers

Respiratory Protection
Program- Air Compressor
- SCBASafety
- Fire DepartmentTarget Hazard
- Sprinklered Buildings
- Knox Boxes & Keys

Technical Rescue

Training

Volunteers

Wildland

Radios

Captain Jeff Nicklas and Engineer Kevin Voorhees

Emergency communications are vital to response personnel for both notification of emergency incidents and for firefighter safety on emergency scenes. NFPA 1561 – Standards on Emergency Service Incidents requires all emergency personnel in areas immediately dangerous to life and health to have radio communication. Eureka Fire Department has in the past been able to provide its personnel with adequate and appropriate radio communication equipment. A new challenge for our department is on the horizon; radio frequency narrow banding. Effective January 1, 2013, the Federal Communications Commission mandates that all users must move to a narrow band radio system under FCC order 04-292. This comes in light of the continued use of radio wave space by more and more customers nationwide. Frequencies are taken up not only by programmable radios, but by cell phones and other wireless uses. In our local area, many of our allied agencies, including CalFire and Arcata Fire, are planning to transition ahead of schedule near the end of 2010 or early 2011 if possible. While wide band and narrow band equipment can communicate on a given channel, communications are degraded. We continue to work with our current upgradable equipment, future anticipated needs, and our radio vendor to make this future transition as seamless as possible.



If you have any questions about radio frequency narrow banding, feel free to shoot Jeff or Kevin a note.

Wildland Update - Fire Shelters

Engineer Ben Miller

This is an update to last quarter's piece on the New Generation Fire Shelters, and Eureka Fire Department's to comply with federal standards making them mandatory on wildland fire incidents. We have taken delivery of the new compliant shelters and webgear to carry in the units. Through competitive bid, we identified a vendor that could provide both shelters and webgear at a very good price. The shelters, which come in two sizes, and the large model designed to work for people of all heights. Those who have worked in the wildland field will remember the previous fire shelters, and how challenging they could be to deploy because of the compact overall size of the shelter. The new shelters are designed to give the user a larger air space inside, as well as to stand up to more intense heat. The shelter is, of course, a last resort in a dire situation, and does not mean that crews can operate in more dangerous conditions. The new shelters and webgear have been placed on all fire engines, Truck 8181, and in select command vehicles. We still wait with hope of the 2009 Assistance to Firefighters Grant process for an award that will upgrade our wildland protective equipment, but this purchase allocated by the City Council provides appropriate gear to keep our personnel safe and our department compliant.



Fire Captain II Ed Laidlaw prepares for his new role as Fire Prevention Officer



Over the last four months Fire Captain II Ed Laidlaw has received formal and on-the-job training in preparation for his planned transition into the role of Fire Prevention Officer. In January Ed was selected to rotate into the Prevention Officer's position starting July 1st. Since then he has attended four weeks of formal training in Building and Fire Codes, plan review, alarm systems, and fire cause investigation.

Ed has been working closely with our current Prevention Officer, Captain II Chris Emmons. They have worked together on developing Ed's plan review and code interpretation skills. Chris

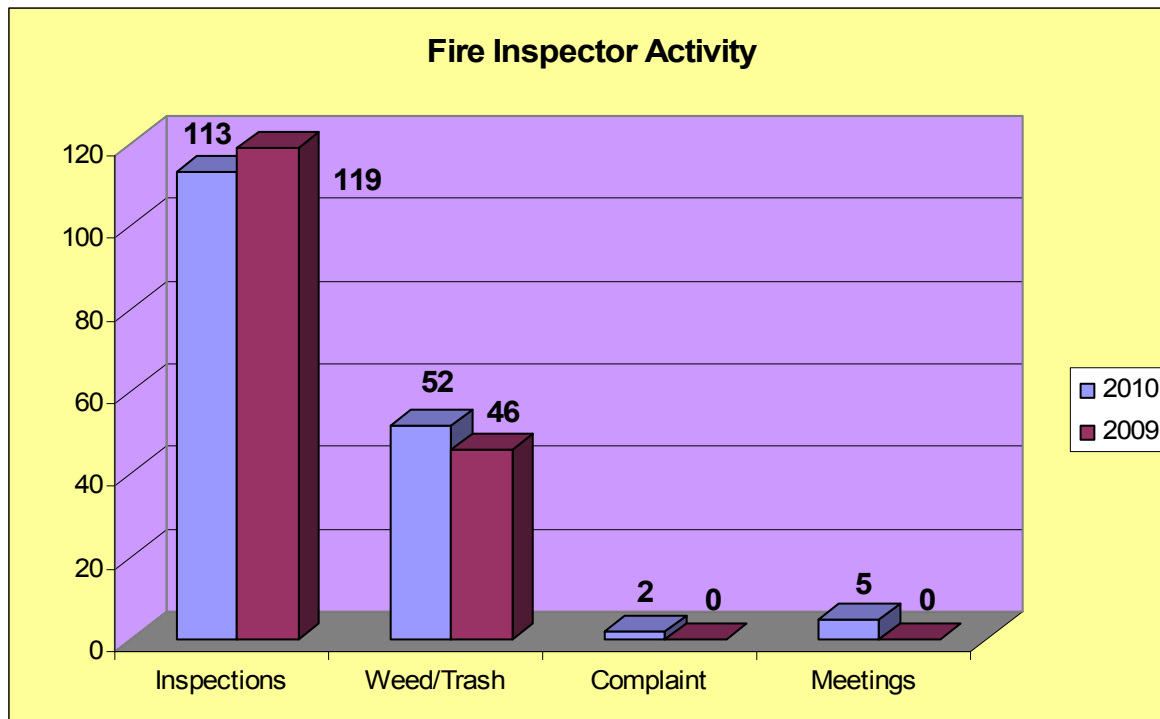
said, "Ed's development exceeds all of my expectations".

July 1st Ed will move into the Prevention Officer role with a strong foundation of code knowledge and plan review experience. This process will result in Ed's coming up to full speed in the office much quicker than others who have gone in with less advanced prevention experience.

This transition process strengthens the depth of our department's prevention knowledge, skills and abilities as Captain 2 Emmons will take his experience with him.

We're looking forward to Ed's transition into the Fire Prevention Bureau in July knowing that he has already demonstrated his enthusiasm and ability in the field. Good job to Ed and Chris!

Rusty Goodlive



Building Owners Commit to Fire Safety

An effort by local building owners reflects a growing understanding of the dangers of fire and the benefits of fire sprinklers. Daniel and Jayne Ollivier have just completed the installation of fire sprinklers in the Historic Old Town Ritz Building. This building contains significant fire and life safety hazards due to its mixed residential and commercial occupancy, combustible construction and large concealed spaces. The installation of this system is a significant investment on the part of the Olliviers for which they should be congratulated.

St. Bernard's Catholic Church has begun fundraising for installing sprinklers in their building. According to a national report, 65% of reported church fires had no smoke alarms and 96% had no sprinkler system.

Two Dorm Rooms; Two Identical Fires



Without Fire Sprinklers



With Fire Sprinklers

The 2011 California Building Code will require fire sprinklers to be installed in new residential buildings. Currently sprinklers are required in residential buildings with three units or more. In 2006, 19% of all reported fires occurred in one- and two-family structures and these fires caused 66% (2,155) of the fire deaths. When both smoke alarms and fire sprinklers are present in a home, the risk of dying in a fire is reduced by 82%, when compared to a residence without either.

New residential sprinkler systems have been installed in the new wing of the Best Western Bayshore Inn and an apartment complex at 3204 T Street. Another apartment complex is in plan review at 3rd / T Streets.

In Eureka we have experienced several fires extinguished by fire sprinkler systems. Fires at Schmidbauer, the Bayshore Mall, Clarion Inn and others were never reported because they were quickly extinguished by sprinklers. We all remember fires in buildings without sprinklers like Carpet Depot, Eureka Meats and the County Garage.

New sprinkler systems as a result of the code changes and building owner awareness will make our community safer. Sprinklers are an investment; an investment in safety, our buildings, our businesses and our community.

Eureka Fire's Bill Walser is On-The-Go Keeping Us Safe



Eureka Fire Department's Fire Inspector, Bill Walser, is a busy man. Bill inspects apartments, licensed facilities and conducts weed and rubbish abatement inspections. He's our point man for answering residential code questions from tenants and landlords on residential code requirements. Plus he's busy following up on inspection issues and maintaining detailed records.

While it would be easy to justify running these programs with federal, state, and local mandates, the real benefit of these inspections is the safety of our citizens and our Fire Department personnel. Unsafe buildings create hazards that start small but are known to grow and become potential disasters. "Stop it now" to prevent a future emergency may be considered a motto of the Fire Prevention Bureau's.

The California Health and Safety Code require Fire Departments to conduct annual inspections of



residential apartments, hotels, motels, and other lodging houses. A prevention inspection starts with checking the working conditions of smoke alarms and fire extinguishers. Added to these important points are the recognition of blocked or lack of proper exits, the unsafe storage of property, flammables, the improper use of

electrical extension cords, and more.

Licensed facilities such as day care and residential care homes are also part of Bill's responsibilities. Community Care Licensing requires a Fire and Life safety clearance from us prior to the facility opening and they are inspected annually.

In this last quarter Bill inspected one hundred and nine (109) different apartment buildings totaling five hundred and thirty eight (538) individual units. Six

(6) additional licensed facility inspections were completed.

Our City's weed and rubbish abatement program is intended to reduce fire, health and safety hazards. Complaints may be received from observations by City personnel or citizen and business reported issues.



Overgrown vegetation blocks alleys, prevents clear access to structures, disguises trip and fall hazards, and provides hiding places for undesirable wildlife. Dried overgrown vegetation is a fire waiting to happen. Trash increases fuel loads and is habitat for rodents and insects.

Over the first quarter of this year Bill handled sixty-two (62) Weed and Rubbish abatement actions on fifty-two (52) cases. There were twenty-seven (27) new cases, eighteen (18) follow-up reports, and seventeen (17) cases closed.

We were fortunate to be able to send Bill to Roseville in January for a one-day training on licensed facilities code requirements. Bill came back from the trip upbeat and energized. It was also satisfying to hear that while Bill learned a lot from the class, he also learned that our current inspection practices in these facilities are fundamentally sound.

The goal of our Prevention Bureau is the safety of our citizens, buildings, and community. Bill's efforts have a significant impact on our citizen's safety through weed and rubbish abatement, working smoke alarms, fire extinguishers and more. If you want to talk to Bill leave a message at 4009; he won't be there, he's a busy man.

